



# THE GALATIAN MERCENARIES

THE STRENGTHENING OF CELTIC CULTURAL  
IDENTITY IN PTOLEMAIC EGYPT

Daniel J. Saveur



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Name: Daniel J. Saveur

Student: 4079116

Email: [d.j.saveur@students.uu.nl](mailto:d.j.saveur@students.uu.nl)

Lecturer: dr. Rolf Strootman

Department: History

Course: BA thesis



For my mother  
To whom this BA thesis owes a lot  
And I, everything



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*Their armor includes man-sized shields decorated in individual fashion. Some of them have projecting bronze animals of fine workmanship. On their heads they wear bronze helmets which possess large projecting figures lending the appearance of enormous stature to the wearer. In some cases, horns form one part of the helmet, while in other cases it is relief figures of the foreparts of birds or quadrupeds. Their trumpets again are of a peculiar barbaric kind. And produce a harsh sound which suits the tumult of war. Some have iron breast-plated of chainmail, while others fight naked.<sup>1</sup>*

-- Diodorus Siculus, 5.30.2

The Celts are one of the most remarkable phenomena ever to burst out on the European scene. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, apparently out of nowhere, waves of raiders carrying man-sized shields and long swords appeared south off the Alps and burst forth towards the civilizations that ring the Mediterranean Sea. 'Now an enemy, never seen or even heard of before, was rousing up war from the ocean and the furthers corner of the world', wrote Livy, the Roman author of the monumental *Ab Urbe Condita Libra* between 27 and 9 BC, describing the Gauls marching towards Rome in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC to sack her.<sup>2</sup> Livy relates how the Romans;

*'Beheld from the Citadel of the City filled with the enemy who were running about in all streets. While some new disaster was constantly occurring, first in one quarter than in another, they could no longer control their eyes and minds as though set by Fortune to be the spectators of their countries fall, powerless to protect anything left of all they possessed beyond their lives, the day which had been spend in such misery was succeeded by a night not one whit more restful, this again by a day of anguish, there was not a single hour free from the sight of some ever fresh calamity'.<sup>3</sup>*

A similar practice can be observed in Greece. The Greek author Pausanias memorated the savage battle lust of the Gauls at Delphi;

*'They marched against their enemies with the unreasoning fury and passion of brutes. Slashed with axe or sword they kept their desperation while they still breathed; pierced by arrow or javelin, they did not abate of their passion so long as life remained. Some drew out from their wounds the spears, by which they had been hit, and threw them at the Greeks or used them in close fighting'.<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Diodorus Siculus, 5.30.2; translated by Charles Oldfather (1933). All translations from Loeb editions.

<sup>2</sup> Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita*, 5.37

<sup>3</sup> Livy 5.42

<sup>4</sup> Pausanias, *Hellados Periegesis*, 10.21.3

The shock of these attacks on Rome and Delphi has not only burnt itself into the collective mind of the ancient world but also in the minds of historians and scholars, many who to this day echo the words of Livy and Pausanias. Their work has shaped much of our perception of the Celts. For the Greeks and Romans this fascination was tinged with fear and respect for the Celtic prowess in battle. In popular culture, the image of the warrior with his man-sized shield, drooping moustache and long sword remains a central icon of the Celtic culture. Even today, the application of modern standards of morals and ethics to history often seems inevitable. Even though most historians attempt to avoid judgement few of them fail to characterize these cultures as civilized, sophisticated and above all superior, particularly in contrast to with the 'barbarians' they conquered.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is subject to the ongoing debate of Othering. Trading in stereotypes, the manufacturing of traits and branding those who are different as inferior have had an inordinate grip on world history. If we turn towards ancient history similar examples of Othering can be found among the Greeks for whom use of the word 'barbarian' to describe non-Greeks was ubiquitous. By making use of the vast amount of work that has already been published on the matter of Othering by prominent scholars such as Hegel, De Beauvoir, Said, Huntington and Gruen, this paper seeks to create a theoretical framework that focusses on a specific military minority group, in this case Celtic mercenaries, that serve in a foreign culture. Othering in this case, is not merely an identity imposed upon the mercenaries by the local dominant culture but rather it is the strengthening of the Celtic cultural identity is a significant degree the result of identity formation by the cultural group itself.

The most far-flung of the migrating Celtic tribes in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC settled in Asia Minor. They were invited by king Nicomedes of Bithynia to act as a buffer against the territorial ambitions of the Seleucid king Antiochus I. Eventually settling in Phrygia, they proved difficult to control and became a new political and military entity in the Eastern Mediterranean. Galatia became a popular source of mercenaries in the region. This thesis aims to analyze to what extent the cultural identity of these warbands of mercenaries retained their Celtic identity, in Galatia and Ptolemaic Egypt. The main question that I address is as follows: to what extent can the cultural identity of Galatian mercenaries serving in the armies of the Ptolemies be deduced from antique sources and material culture, providing evidence for the strengthening of said identity in Egypt? To address this question, I will answer the following sub questions: Did the Gauls in Asia Minor retain their cultural characteristics, despite being surrounded by Hellenistic cities? How is the Galatian identity set culturally apart from the dominant culture in Ptolemaic Egypt? How did the weaponry of Galatian mercenaries differ from that of the Hellenistic doctrine?

Working from this premise, the order of this thesis is as follows: I will start by discussing one of the most hotly debated issues in Celtic studies in the last century has been the question of how to define what it means to be a Celt. The first chapter of this thesis will therefore be concentrating on the debate regarding approaches to the designation of any group as Celtic. Concluding, I will use the Celtic designation as a way to identify Celtic as linguistic term and as the material culture of the La Tène culture between the 5th and 2nd century BC. The second chapter of this thesis, reflecting the evolving

academic narrative of the concept of the Other and Othering, is presented in the historiography brought forth by scholars ranging from Hegel to more recently, Gruen. I will apply these concepts to the movements of Galatian mercenaries in the eastern Mediterranean in relation to their Greek surroundings. In discussing the presence of these Galatian mercenaries in the East, two different periods should be distinguished. The third chapter describes the Celtic migrations of the 4th and 3rd century BC into Italy and the Balkans, eventually leading to the formation of the Galatian state in Anatolia. Many of the historical sources concerning the Celts relate to the events in Italy and Greece and thus are of great value to interpret how the Greeks perceived the Celtic incursions.

In chapter four I analyze the ethical characteristics of the Gauls settling in Asia minor. Their presence in relation to the surrounding Hellenistic kingdoms and empires, and the inhabitants of Phrygia themselves, will provide a solid base on which an educated assumption concerning their kin in Ptolemaic Egypt can be based. Chapter five is dedicated to the mercenaries who ventured out from Galatia into the service of the successor kings. By using a wide array of sources relating to the use of these mercenaries in the various conflicts a distinct role of these 'barbarian' mercenaries in the region can be established. Chapter six analyzes the presence of Galatian mercenaries in Ptolemaic Egypt. The weaponry of the Galatian mercenary differed greatly from those employed by the military doctrine of the Ptolemean, and in chapter seven I examine the use of the long sword and man-sized shields, associated with the Celts, and how this became part of their cultural identity. While archeological finds in Egypt are sparse, relating them to their European counterparts offers fresh insights.

The movement of Galatian warbands cannot be easily told; neither the archeology nor written sources exist in large quantity. This thesis therefore leans heavily on the use of primary sources associated with the invasions of Italy and Greece. Authors like Diodorus Siculus, Pausanias, Polybius and Livy, despite mostly being written at later date, give a unique insight into the way the Greek and Romans perceived or how they wished others to perceive the Celtic tribes. To compliment these questions, I consulted a wide variety of sourcebooks, articles and other research findings as well as making use of archeological finds to patch together a consistent image of the Galatians in the East.



# **PART I: THE CELTS AS THE OTHER**





# ON THE CELTS

The definition of the term Celtic must be briefly explored before the main questions in this thesis are to be addressed. With the ongoing and controversial debate on the use of the term Celtic in academia to identify ethnic groups, in a period that stretches from the Greek historians in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to modern historians on the British Isles, scholars like the English archeologist and historian John Collis argue that the term has become entirely meaningless and should, perhaps, be completely abandoned.<sup>5</sup> While it is true that in all the turmoil of European history the concept of Celtic-ness has been invented and re-invented many times, British historian Barry Cunliffe passionately contradicts this arid and somewhat despairing view. Cunliffe argues that 'there always have been people who have believed themselves to be Celts and others who have looked at them from a distance and offered convenient, if irreverent, stereotypes.'<sup>6</sup> Instead of embracing the negative approach, Cunliffe points out how change has been a constant factor in dealings with the Celts. They were being defined and redefined on a regular basis by the peoples they encountered.<sup>7</sup> This dynamic can surely be seen in the migrations of the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC, as the terror-stricken Greeks and Romans hide behind their walls, gaining a fearsome reputation for the Galatians residing in Egypt in the centuries to follow. In short, defining the Celts in history is not the easiest thing to accomplish.

Historians like Collis argue in *The Celts: Origins, Myths & Inventions* that the ancient Celts are a merely a modern construct.<sup>8</sup> Similar sentiments are echoed by New-Zealand historian Peter Wells in *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians: Archeology and Identity in Iron Age Europe*.<sup>9</sup> Others scholars argue in that the continuation of the Celts into modernity is merely an expression of 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century nationalism, like that of Edward Lhuyd.<sup>10</sup> One of the main problems associated with the Celts are related to the question if the Britons considered themselves Celts. While the Britons themselves did not write, Roman authors like Julius Caesar did notice similarities in the language and material culture of the tribes of Gaul and Britain but insisted they were separate peoples.<sup>11</sup> While archeologists have established there have been an exchange of goods and people between Gaul and the British Isles, both cultures remain distinctive in nature.<sup>12</sup>

However, historians like Myles Dillon and Nora Chadwick echo my sentiments in

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<sup>5</sup> John Collis, 'Adieu Hallstatt! Adieu La Tène!', *Revue Aquitania* 1 (1986) 3, 327-330, at 328.

<sup>6</sup> Barry Cunliffe, introduction of: John Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Celtic World* (London 2009) 7-8, at 7.

<sup>7</sup> Cunliffe, *Historical Atlas of the Celtic World*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> John Collis, *The Celts: Origins, Myths & Inventions* (Wiltshire 2003) 12.

<sup>9</sup> Peter Wells, *Beyond Celts, Germans and Scythians: Archeology and Identity in Iron Age Europe* (New York 2001) 12-14.

<sup>10</sup> John Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Celtic World* (London 2009) 14.

<sup>11</sup> Julius Caesar, *Commentarii de Bello Gallico*, 5.12

<sup>12</sup> John Koch, 'Some thoughts on ethnic identity, cultural pluralism, and the future of Celtic studies', in: Raimund Karl and David Stifter (red.), *The Celtic World* (London 2007) 381-396, at 384.

*The Celtic Realms: History and Civilization* and relate how 'the attempt to present the Celts in history as one people, with a common tradition and a common character, is new, and in some degree, experimental. It seems to us to have been justified beyond our expectations'.<sup>13</sup> The American historian John Haywood suggests in his *The Historical Atlas of the Celtic World* that 'the most satisfactory way to define the Celts is not in the terms of how they or may not have called themselves', but purely in linguistic terms.<sup>14</sup> The survival of Celtic languages into modern times provides a strong thread of continuity. However, whilst his argument certainly has merit, both the continental Celts as the insular Celts residing on the British Isles are included, historians and archeologists have identified a growing similarity based upon material culture, the organization in society and beliefs. Language, material culture, beliefs and society can be used to impose a loose form of unity among a diverse range of mixed tribal communities in Iron Age Europe.

For this thesis I will therefore follow the definition suggested by British historian Timothy Bridgeman who suggest in *Keltoi, Galatai, Galli; Where They All One People?* that the term 'Celtic' should be used to describe a linguistic and material culture grouping.<sup>15</sup> The terms Celts, Gauls and Galatians are variously used to refer to the subject in specific stages of this thesis. Occasionally, primary sources will often continue to refer to them as Gauls or Gallic. To avoid issues while defining the Celts, I will refer to them as Celts and Gauls in the first section of this thesis until the formation of Galatia as a state. After that I will refer to them as Galatians, unless used otherwise by primary sources.

## THE OTHER IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Division of the world into groups has been a common trend throughout human history. Trading in stereotypes, the manufacturing of traits related to ethnic groupings and branding those who are perceived as different as inferior retains their full force in contemporary conflicts across the globe. The practice of denigration and demonisation of ethnic groups with the goal to declare the superiority of one's own culture in contrast to that a foreign culture is therefore, unfortunately, all too familiar.

The concept of the Other and Othering has taken root in a wide array of academic fields ranging from the social sciences to psychoanalysis. Their origins can be traced back to German scholar and philosopher Georg W. F. Hegel (1770-1831) who achieved wide recognition with his famous work *Phänomenologie des Geistes* where the Other is seen as a constituent part of human preoccupation and self-consciousness in the shape of a Master

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<sup>13</sup> Myles Dillon & Nora Chadwick, *The Celtic Realms: History and Civilisation* (London 1967) 11.

<sup>14</sup> John Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Ancient World* (London 2009) 15.

<sup>15</sup> Timothy Bridgeman, 'Keltoi, Galatai, Galli; Where They All One People?' *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 24 (2004) 155-162, at 155.

and Slave' dialectic.<sup>16</sup> Complementing the work of Hegel, the German-Austrian philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) uses Othering as a basis for intersubjectivity. Husserl notes in *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology* how the physiological relationship between people, the Self and the Other, is a only a constitution of an alter ego, a perception of the Self.<sup>17</sup> Another important contributor is found in the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980) who uses Husserl's intersubjectivity to describe in *Being and Nothingness: An Essay on Phenomenological Ontology* how the world of the Self is greatly altered by the appearance up to a point where the world is even oriented towards the Other.<sup>18</sup> The influential work of the French philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986), known for her impact on contemporary feminism, applied in *The Second Sex* Hegel's concept of master of slave to that of the power relations of a society that encourages male domination over woman.<sup>19</sup> More recent theory on the concept of Othering aim their arrows at the workings of imperialism and colonialism. Foremost among these works is the influential work of Palestinian-American scholar Edward W. Said. His *Orientalism* is a critique of cultural representations and is regarded as one of the defining characteristics of Othering. Said is focusing on the divide between East and West, seen from Eurocentric eyes.<sup>20</sup> Thus creating a practical method of distinct cultural discrimination and imperialist domination of the Orient that some scholars claim dates back to classical antiquity.<sup>21</sup>

This alleged confrontation of East and West is a recurring theme throughout Western history. The ancient Greek historian and geographer Herodotus of Halicarnassus (c. 484 BC– c. 425 BC) describes in *The Histories* how the Hellenic world perceived the East as a collection of barbarians.<sup>22</sup> While Herodotus himself can be seen as friendly to the 'barbarians' other authors like Pausanias have used his work as a tool of propaganda to instill negative images, misrepresentations and stereotypes of the enemy. The Persians, as the Other, are essentially used by various authors to strengthen Greek identity, their distinctiveness and superiority. Similar traces of Othering in the Hellenic world can be found in the later work of Pausanias who argues that 'the greatest of the Greek exploits against the barbarians' took place when the Gauls invade Greece in 280-278 BC.<sup>23</sup> Like the Persian invasion of Greece in 480 BC, a large battle was fought at Thermopylae, eventually cumulating in the siege of Delphi. The work of Pausanias thus greatly echoes Herodotus's coverage of Xerxes' invasion. Again, the narrative of the brave struggle of the Hellenes

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<sup>16</sup> Georg W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Bamberg 1807) 83.

<sup>17</sup> Edmund Husserl, *The Essential Husserl: Basic writings in Transcendental Phenomenology* (Bloomington 1999) 8.

<sup>18</sup> Peter Caws, *Satre*, 107.

<sup>19</sup> Simone De Beauvoir, *Le Deuxième Sexe* (Bordeaux 1949) 12.

<sup>20</sup> Edward Saïd, *Orientalism* (New York 1979) 26.

<sup>21</sup> Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (New York 2010) 2.

<sup>22</sup> Herodotus, *Ἱστορίαι*, 2.5.7

<sup>23</sup> Pausanias 10.19.5

against waves of barbarian invaders at their borders is being used. Like Herodotus and Pausanias before him, American historian Samuel P. Huntington argues in *Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* how at the end of the Cold War between the capitalist and communist block cultural and religious identities would become the primary source of conflict in the world.<sup>24</sup> More recently, is the absurd hypothesis of American historian Anthony Pagden who argues in *Worlds at War: the 2,500-Year Struggle between East and West* how the Greco-Persian Wars of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC are somehow to be blamed for contemporary hostilities between East and West.<sup>25</sup>

The work of American historian Erich S. Gruen offers a most welcome alternative approach. Gruen argues in *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* against the Hobbesian view of *homo homini lupus* in Pagden's work. Gruen believes that the ancients had a 'far more mixed, nuanced and complex opinions about other peoples' than previously thought.<sup>26</sup> According to Gruen, the prevalent discourse in academia dictates that ancient Greeks, Romans, and Jews largely defined themselves in contrast with foreign peoples.<sup>27</sup> Gruen moves away from this view of self-definition at the expense of a much despised 'Other'. Instead, Gruen argues the case for more complexity in the opinions of the ancient Greeks, Roman, and Jews regarding foreign peoples, such as the Phoenicians, Ethiopians, Egyptians or, more interesting for this thesis, the Gauls.<sup>28</sup> Sources like Polybius or Diodorus describe the Gauls as inveterate adversaries of Rome. Unsurprisingly, the sack of Rome in the 4th century BC remained a dark episode in the city's history and was still fresh in the mind of its citizens. Polybius relates how 'they were excessive drinkers and notoriously fickle and unpredictable in their behavior' who often 'appropriated the property of neighbors or allies'.<sup>29</sup> Diodorus comments on 'the penchant for challenges among themselves to individual combat, even over significant disputes'<sup>30</sup> Despite these negative characteristics associated with the Gauls, a grudging admiration can be found in their work. The *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* of Julius Caesar describes the Gauls in a fashion that goes beyond the mere depiction of the foe.<sup>31</sup> Gruen concludes that Caesar portrays the Gauls 'with all their flaws, as a valorous people, fiercely devoted to liberty,

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<sup>24</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of Word Order', *Foreign Affairs* 74 (1993) 22-49, at 25.

<sup>25</sup> Anthony Pagden, *Worlds at War: The 2,500-Year Struggle between East and West* (Oxford 2008) 14.

<sup>26</sup> Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (New York 2010) 3.

<sup>27</sup> Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Gruen, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Polybius, *Ἱστορίαι Historíai*, 2.7.5-6

<sup>30</sup> Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, 5.28.5-6

<sup>31</sup> Gruen, 158.

and adherents of moral and religion remarkably akin to those of Rome'.<sup>32</sup>

Besides the evidence provided by historical sources, the presence of the Other inspired Hellenistic artist to produce a variety of images of the Galatians. Among them the famous statue of the Dying Gaul (figure 1) which shows a Galatian warrior and his wife, in the act of killing himself with his sword. He wears a torc around his neck, an unmistakably indication that this warrior is a Celt. Similar garb can be seen at the statue of the wounded



Figure 1 The marble sculpture of the Dying Gaul (at: [attalus.org](http://attalus.org), 2019).

Gaul, who is awaiting death. Both statues are copies of Hellenistic statues, possibly part of a series of bronze statues commissioned by King Attalus of Pergamon to honor his victory over the Galatians.<sup>33</sup> Both Celts are pictured as 'giants of violent pathos, survivors of a heroic age long past, but still dangerous'.<sup>34</sup> When viewed as the Other it becomes clear that 'they reflect the viewpoint of a military adversary rather than a detached observer'.<sup>35</sup> These depictions of the Celts may have been used by later authors when they wrote their own descriptions of this fierce warrior people.

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<sup>32</sup> Erich S. Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (New York 2010) 158.

<sup>33</sup> David Rankin, 'The Celts through Classical Eyes', In: Miranda Green (red.), *The Celtic World* (London 1995) 21-33, at 21.

<sup>34</sup> Rankin, 'The Celts through Classical Eyes', 21.

<sup>35</sup> Bernhard Maier and Kevin Windle, *The Celts: a history from earliest times to the present* (New York 2003) 96.



## **PART II: THE CELTS IN ASIA MINOR**





# MERCENARIES AND SETTLERS

The Celtic migrations began soon after the start of the La Tène period. Emerging around 400 BC the migrations up an important feature of Celtic history. American scholar Michael Newton suggests in *Early Celtic Social Structures* that the Celtic migrations are a product of a society that was highly competitive and militaristic in nature.<sup>36</sup> As was typical in this period, the Celts made use of partible inheritance which means that after the death of the father 'the wealth, including land, was split amongst all his sons'.<sup>37</sup> The pressure of growing families in relation to a constant division of property and the danger of soil depletion on the lands leads to discord within tribal communities.<sup>38</sup> The migration of tribesman and their families therefore must have been an effective way to release internal tensions within the tribe.<sup>39</sup> Migrating from the north the Celts crossed over the Alps into Italy where the tribes of the Boii, Insubres and the Senones quickly took hold of the Po valley, thus weakening the Etruscans.<sup>40</sup> In 390 BC the Celts soundly defeated the Romans at the banks of the river Allia. Rome, which during this period was still a minor power in the Italic region, was sacked. During the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC, Gallic tribes like the Volcae and the Boii had begun migrating southeast to settle in the Danube basin and her tributaries.<sup>41</sup> By 300 BC, possibly emboldened by their growing numbers, a loose confederation of Gallic tribes continued to march east into the Balkan peninsula where they attacked and defeated the Illyrians, Triballi and Paionians who bore the brunt of Celtic ambitions.<sup>42</sup> From the northern regions of these newly conquered lands the Gallic tribes greedily eyed the amassed wealth of the Macedonian Empire. Whilst Alexander the Great was campaigning north of the border against the Thracians, and whom 'he ascertained that these nations were mediating a change of policy' tribal envoys of the Gauls came to seek friendship with the great conqueror.<sup>43</sup> The Greek author Arrian of Nicomedia (c.86-c.160) claims in the *Anabasis* how 'some even arrived from the Celts who dwelt near the Ionian gulf'.<sup>44</sup> Alexander then asked the Celtic envoys 'what thing in the world caused them special alarm, expecting that his own great fame had reached the Celts [...] and that they would say that they feared him most of all things'.<sup>45</sup> In line with their, according to Appian,

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<sup>36</sup> Michael Newton, 'Early Celtic Social Structures' (version 15 August 2002), <http://exploringcelticiv.web.unc.edu/early-celtic-social-structures> (19 februari 2019).

<sup>37</sup> Michael Newton, 'Early Celtic Social Structures' (version 15 August 2002), <http://exploringcelticiv.web.unc.edu/early-celtic-social-structures> (19 februari 2019).

<sup>38</sup> John Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Celtic World* (London 2009) 36.

<sup>39</sup> John Collis, *The European Iron Age* (London 1984) 126.

<sup>40</sup> Simon James, *Exploring the world of the Celts* (London 1993) 33.

<sup>41</sup> James, *Exploring the world of the Celts*, 38.

<sup>42</sup> Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The Celts: A History* (Cork 2002) 48.

<sup>43</sup> Arrian, *Anabasis*, 1.4.17

<sup>44</sup> Arrian, 1.4.18

<sup>45</sup> Arrian, 1.4.18

haughty disposition the envoys 'said they were afraid that the sky would some time or other fall down upon them'.<sup>46</sup> While we can't be certain if this incident did happen or is just part of the author's lively imagination, we can be sure that, emboldened by the chaos that erupted in 289 BC after the death of Alexander the Great, the Gauls began raiding deep into Thrace and Macedon, leading to the capture and death of the Macedonian successor king Ptolemy Ceraunos in 279 BC.<sup>47</sup> In the turmoil of the rivalries and wars of the successors the Gallic chieftains Brennus and Achichorios launched a massive plundering raid into Greece in 279 BC. The Greek author and geographer Pausanias (110-180 AD) writes extensively about his travels in Greece. His *Hellados Periegesi* is nothing short of a comprehensive traveler's account featuring ten books of sights of historical and cultural importance within Greece. Despite hailing from the 2nd century his account on the Gallic invasions offers a clear insight in the Hellenistic tradition of viewing the Gallic invasions as a battle between the civilized 'Hellenes' versus the 'Barbarians'. The observant reader will notice the resemblance to *The Clash of Civilizations* by American political scholar Samuel P. Huntington, a hypothesis that posits that people's cultural and religious identities will be the primary source of conflict.<sup>48</sup> Pausanias's description of the invasion of Greece by the Gauls is therefore formulaic in nature and deliberately echoes the description of the invasion of Greece by the Persians, two centuries earlier.<sup>49</sup> A coalition of Aetolians, Athenians, Phocians, Boeotians and other Greeks held a heroic but unsuccessful defense at Thermopylae.<sup>50</sup> Pausanias records how the Greeks occupied 'the pass where it was narrowest, they tried to keep the foreigners from entering Greece; but the Celts, having discovered the path by which Ephialtes of Trachis once led the Persians, overwhelmed the Phocians stationed there and crossed Oeta unperceived by the Greeks'.<sup>51</sup> The use of the cursed name of Ephialtes links the invasion of the Gauls more closely to the notorious invasion by the Persians and suggests a clash of civilizations between mortal enemies. The British historian Peter John Rhodes comments in *Impact of the Persian Wars on Classical Greece* how 'the war was represented afterwards as the Great Patriotic War'.<sup>52</sup> Dutch historian Rolf Strootman states in *Kings against Celts: deliverance from barbarians as a theme in Hellenistic royal propaganda* how the attack on the sanctuary of Delphi was more than a mere invasion. Strootman argues that the Greeks conceived the incursions as an attack on civilization itself; not only because Delphi was the principal shrine of Greece but was also regarded as the symbolic navel of the world

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<sup>46</sup> Arrian, 1.4.18

<sup>47</sup> Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The Celts*, 53.

<sup>48</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order', *Foreign Affairs* 74 (1993) 22-49, at 39.

<sup>49</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts* (Oxford 2018) 91.

<sup>50</sup> Stephen Mitchell, 'The Galatians: Representation and Reality', in: Andrew Erskine (red.), *A companion to the Hellenistic World* (New York 2009) 280-293, at 281.

<sup>51</sup> Pausanias, 1.4.2

<sup>52</sup> Peter J. Rhodes, 'Impact of the Persian Wars on Classical Greece', in: Emma Bridges, Edith Hall and Peter J. Rhodes (red.), *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars* (Oxford 2007) 31-45, at 34.

which 'demarcated the four quarters of the compass and was a central element in late Classical cosmology'.<sup>53</sup> In short, the bloody campaign of the Gauls invading the Greek mainland now reached much further south than before. Pausanias records how 'the Gauls, now south of the Gates, cared not at all to capture the other towns, but were very eager to sack Delphi and the treasures of the god'.<sup>54</sup> The Gauls, as the mythology claims, laid siege to the sanctuary. The attempt to take sanctuary, with divine intervention from Apollo, failed, and the Gallic army suffered a terrible defeat at the hands of the Greeks at Delphi.

Early in the Macedon campaign a large Gallic force of twenty thousand warriors broke away from the main force. This army of Gauls turned back and headed north and east where they plundered their way through Thrace. Others, eventually, founding the kingdom of Tylis.<sup>55</sup> The Gauls of Tylis terrorized the Greek coastal cities for years to come until they were defeated by the Thracians in 212 BC.<sup>56</sup> The main body of the army ended up besieging Byzantium, present day Istanbul.<sup>57</sup> However, surprisingly, the city of Byzantium held out against the marauding Gauls thus successfully blocking them from crossing over to Asia. A warband of Gauls under command of Loutarios stole a few ships and successfully crossed the Hellespont into Asia Minor.<sup>58</sup> The arrival of the main body of the Gauls under command of Leonnorios in Anatolia, however, was not preceded by the usual pattern of raiding, conquest and immigration as seen on the Balkans and Italy. In 281 BC, the Hellenistic king Nicomedes I seeks the Gauls out to aid him in securing the throne of Bithynia against the Seleucid king Antiochus I, who ruled most of Anatolia.<sup>59</sup> Leonnorios and Loutarios joined forces once more. Although the Gauls were, disputedly, defeated in 275 BC, they settled in Phrygia and could not be dislodged, and for many years they raided the wealthy cities along the Aegean coastline. In this period the term *Galatika* entered the Greek vocabulary, as the Gauls demanded tribute from the Greek kings.<sup>60</sup> The region became known as Galatia, after *Galatoi*, the Greek name for the Gauls.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Rolf Strootman, 'Kings against Celts: Deliverance from barbarians as a theme in Hellenistic royal propaganda', *The Manipulative Mode* (2004) 101-141, at 137.

<sup>54</sup> Pausanias, 1.4.4

<sup>55</sup> Polybius 4.46

<sup>56</sup> Jan Bouzek, 'Celtic Campaigns in Southern Thrace and the Tylis Kingdom: the Duchcov Fibula in Bulgaria and the Destruction of Pistiros', in: John Megaw, Paulina Poleska and Halina Dobrzanska (red.), *Celts on the Margin: Studies in European Cultural Interaction, 7<sup>th</sup> century BC-1<sup>st</sup> century AD* (London 2005) 93-102, 94.

<sup>57</sup> Altay Coskun, 'Belonging and Isolation in Central Anatolia: The Galatians in the Graeco-Roman World', *Belonging and Isolation in the Hellenistic World* 51 (2013), 73-85, at 73.

<sup>58</sup> Arrian, 1.4.18

<sup>59</sup> Simon James, *Exploring the world of the Celts* (London 1993) 40.

<sup>60</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History, c. 1000 BC-51 AD* (London 1997), 96.

<sup>61</sup> John Haywood, *Historical Atlas of the Celtic World* (London 2009) 40.

# GALATIA

Did the Gauls in Asia Minor retain their ethnic characteristics while being surrounded by Hellenistic cities? The arrival of the Gauls in Asia Minor was not predated by the usual pattern of raiding, invasion and conquest. Instead, they were invited by the Hellenistic king Nicomedes of Bithynia to act as a buffer against the ambitions of the Seleucid king Antiochus I. However, once the Gauls arrived in Anatolia, they proved difficult to control. When the Gauls started to settle down in Anatolia they were made up of three tribes; the Tectosages, the Tolistobogii and the Trocmi.<sup>62</sup> The population of the high, dry and windy plateau seems to have rapidly mixed with these Celtic newcomers.<sup>63</sup>

In the current concept of Hellenisation, which has been dominant in the research of cultural interactions in the ancient Greek world for the last few decades, it is assumed that cultures in this period became Hellenised, and thus merged themselves in the dominant culture of their rulers. Nonetheless, during the Galatians in modern Anatolia provide an intriguing example of a dominant culture taking over a region which yet retained much of her ethnic integrity in the third century BC. None the less, the last decade a new trend can be seen where historians like Gruen are looking at cultural interaction as a more sophisticated process of negotiation between two cultures.<sup>64</sup> The presence of the local population of Phrygia and the arrival of the Galatians must have led to an ethnically mixed entity where locals are absorbed by the Galatians, with the elite, probably, descended from the original settler families.<sup>65</sup> Despite heavily outnumbered by the local population, the Galatians established themselves firmly in the region.<sup>66</sup>

Like the precedent of the kingdom of Tyllis, traces in the historical sources suggest that Galatia remained distinctly Celtic.<sup>67</sup> According to Strabo, the social structure of the tribes was Celtic where 'the three tribes spoke the same language and differed from each other in no respect; and each was divided into four portions which were called tetrarchies, each tetrarchy having its own tetrarch, and also one judge and one military commander, both subject to the tetrarch, and two subordinate commanders. The Council of the twelve tetrarchs consisted of three hundred men, who assembled at the *Drynemetum*'.<sup>68</sup> If we compare the observations of Strabo and Julius Caesar's *Commentarii Rerum in Gallia Gestarum*, written about 50 BC, on the social structure at the *Concilium Galliarum* in

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<sup>62</sup> Appian, *Historia Romana*, 11.32

<sup>63</sup> Mitchell, Stephen, 'The Galatians: Representation and Reality', in: Andrew Erskine (red.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (New York 2009) 280-293, at 284.

<sup>64</sup> Erich Gruen, *Rethinking the Other in Antiquity* (New York 2010) 5.

<sup>65</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts* (Oxford 2018) 177.

<sup>66</sup> Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The Celts: A History* (Cork 2002) 66.

<sup>67</sup> Qizhen Xie, *The Ethnic Identity and Redefinition of the Galatians in the Hellenistic World* (Honor thesis, New Hampshire) 16.

<sup>68</sup> Strabo, *Geographica*, 7.5.1

Lugdunum, the similarities between the Galatians and Gaul are overwhelming.<sup>69</sup> Both employ the same separation of leadership, make use of a military and civil leader and are headed by a council. While the native population and the Celts lived side by side the Galatians retained much of their Celtic cultural identity. They, for example, did not occupy the cities of Phrygia but preferred to build their traditional hill-forts, oppida, and where surrounded by farming settlements.<sup>70</sup> While we can observe that the definition of 'town' varies greatly depending on cultural area and period, they are often compared to Gallo Roman towns they are seen as being an important part of the cultural and political system of the Celtic tribes, ranging from Britannia to Asia Minor.<sup>71</sup>

The material culture of the Galatians has, unfortunately, not been as extensively studied as one might hope. However, from the beginning the Galatians appear to have adopted large parts of the material culture of their new home in Phrygia. It is therefore sufficient to state that indigenous styles and technologies were most likely adopted when the Gauls settled in the region.<sup>72</sup> This is supported by the lack of distinctive La Tène metalwork found in Asia Minor. If we indeed view Galatia as an ethnically mixed entity the larger native population of Phrygia would retain much of their own material culture, as the Galatians represented a minority in their new territory. Besides the demand of tribute from kingdoms like Pergamum and trading opportunities, the extensive range of the Celtic raiding parties from eastern Asia Minor to as far south as Apameia and Themisonium would ensure a great influx of Hellenistic goods would have found their way into Galatia. However, as raiders and mercenaries they kept their own weapons, distinct peculiarities in dress and their Celtic military traditions.<sup>73</sup>

Besides their social, military and material culture the Galatians were also given a place in Christian history. Like the Celts in Europe, the Galatians in Asia Minor did not write in their own language. The few inscriptions written by Celts that survive are in Greek. While the French archaeologist and sociologist Henri Hubert observes in *The Greatness & Decline of the Celts* how the Greek of the Celtic inscriptions was so correct that he maintained that 'Greek was the language of the Gallic troops [...] Greek was likewise the language of the Gauls in Asia Minor'.<sup>74</sup> The Roman author Livy accounts how 'the king's army was a motley force drawn from many nations and presented the greatest dissimilarity both in the men and their equipment'.<sup>75</sup> He confirms how Antiochus stationed '1500 Gallo-Grecian infantry', on the right of the phalanx 'and with them were

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<sup>69</sup> Strabo, 3.3.2

<sup>70</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History, c. 1000 BC-51 AD* (London 1997), 94.

<sup>71</sup> Olivier Buchsenschutz, 'The Celtic Oppida: a native urbanization phenomenon', in: Raimund Karl and David Stifter (red.), *The Celtic World II* (London 2007) 423-428, at 423.

<sup>72</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts* (Oxford 2018) 180.

<sup>73</sup> Henri Hubert, *The Greatness & Decline of the Celts* (London 1934) 54.

<sup>74</sup> Hubert, *The Greatness & Decline of the Celts*, 52-53.

<sup>75</sup> Livy, 37.40

linked up 3000 cavalry, clad in mail armor and known as *cataphracti*'.<sup>76</sup> Appian confirms the presence of these 'mail-clad Galatians. An equal number of these were stationed on either side of the phalanx. [...] On the left were the Galatian bands of the Tectosagi, the Trocmi, the Tolistoboi, [...] and a mingling of other tribes'.<sup>77</sup> Besides acknowledging the multitude of mercenaries serving in the Seleucid army the mention of Galatians and referring to them as Gallo-Greacian would support the thesis of Hubert. British historian David Rankin, however, strongly disagrees and proposes that the Galatians were in fact anti-Greek and did not become Hellenized to any large degree.<sup>78</sup> Both theories have their merits. While the Galatians clearly used to Greek language in their dealings with the Hellenistic world surrounding them, they were able to maintain their own Celtic language until late into the Roman period, in 25 BC. Perhaps not unlike the Roman western of province of Britannia, who retained their speech after the Roman withdrawal from the island. The perception that Rome successfully assimilated a great variety of peoples and languages completely into one imperial system and language seems rather farfetched.<sup>79</sup>

Historical sources to support Rankin's hypothesis provides us with the famous letter of Saint Jerome of Stridon (347–420) whom visited Galatia and noted in *Comentarii in Epistolam ad Galatos* that they still spoke their Galatian language, and likened it to the Celtic spoken by the Treveri in Northern Gaul.<sup>80</sup> This is supported by the Roman author Lucan who relates in the *Pharsalia* how he met a soothsayer from Phaphlagionia, near the border of Galatia, who spoke Celtic.<sup>81</sup> Using the most widespread definition of the existence of a Celtic culture provided by Hubert, based on lingual merits, we could argue that the retaining of the Celtic language is a key defining feature in doing so. The case of Galatian mercenaries serving in Hellenistic armies, perhaps, holds a similar dynamic in which their cultural identity becomes strengthened by living among a foreign culture.

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<sup>76</sup> Livy, 37.40

<sup>77</sup> Appian, 7.32

<sup>78</sup> David Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (London 2002) 192.

<sup>79</sup> Michael Jones, 'The failure of Romanization in Celtic Britain', *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium* 7 (1987) 4, 126-145, at 126.

<sup>80</sup> St Jerome, *Comentarii in Epistolam ad Galatos*, 11.3

<sup>81</sup> Lucan, *Pharsalia*, 51

## **PART III: THE GALATIANS IN EGYPT**





# GALATIAN MERCENARIES

The movement of warbands of Galatian mercenaries cannot be easily told; neither the archaeology nor written sources exists in large quantity, and these generally favor to highlight the role of kings, generals and heroes. Although writers seldom portrayed them in a favorable light, historical sources, however, do indicate a long period during which Celtic tribes are a source of mercenaries throughout the Eastern Mediterranean region. Traditionally, the kings of antiquity often employed foreign mercenaries to obtain a fighting force whose loyalty was solely based upon their employer and the time it would take for their coffers to run dry. These kings sought to consolidate their reign by using foreign troops to maintain their rule against competitors for the throne among the local aristocrats, and their followers. Despite the considerable economic costs, the use of these mercenaries, who have little regard for local political interests or religious issues, are thus an effective safeguard against internal strife within the kingdom. In theory, the loyalty of these foreign mercenaries is towards the king. From the earliest days of organized warfare until the development of political standing armies in the mid-17th century, kings thus frequently supplemented their military forces with mercenaries and the practice of foreign mercenaries serving as palace guard, bodyguard and personal entourage of a king was a common sight. History is full of examples in which foreign mercenary forces obtain an important role in a royal household. Prominent among such occasions are the Ten Thousand, a force of mainly Greek mercenary units, employed by Cyrus the Younger to wrest the throne of the Persian Empire from his brother, Artaxerxes II.<sup>82</sup> The Germanic Guard of the Roman emperor Caligula, who went as far as to dye his beard blond and wear their garb to appease his mercenaries.<sup>83</sup> In later periods the habit to enlist mercenaries in the armies of kings and emperors continues with the presence of the Varangian Guard (Greek: Τάγμα τῶν Βαράγγων) between the 9<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century in Byzantium or the Pontifical Swiss Guard (Latin: *Pontificia Cohors Helvetica*) whom up to today are maintained by the Holy See in Rome.

The first recorded activity of such Celtic mercenary activity in southeastern Europe is recorded in 367 BC, when Dionysios of Syracuse took a roving Celtic warband into his service while besieging the Greek colony of Croton and sent them to aid the Macedonians against Thebes.<sup>84</sup> It is however not till the expansion into the Balkans and Asia-Minor at the end of the 4th century BC that Celtic mercenary forces 'become a major political and military factor in the Hellenistic world – a phenomenon which is well attested to in ancient sources'.<sup>85</sup> The Galatians and other Celtic tribes come off so well in the account of the

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<sup>82</sup> Matthew Trundle, *Greek Mercenaries: From the Late Archaic Period to Alexander* (New York 2004) 54.

<sup>83</sup> Gaius Suetonius Tranquillus, *De Vita Caesarum*, 52.1

<sup>84</sup> Justinus, *Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum*, 10.5.6, Xenophon, *Hellenica*, 7.1.20 and Diodorus Siculus. 15.70.1

<sup>85</sup> Pádraig Mac Congail, 'The Kingmakers - Celtic Mercenaries', (version 15 Augustus 2014) [https://www.academia.edu/4910243/THE\\_KINGMAKERS\\_-\\_Celtic\\_Mercenaries](https://www.academia.edu/4910243/THE_KINGMAKERS_-_Celtic_Mercenaries) (07 januari 2019).

Greek author Marcus Junianus Justinus that he relates in *Epitoma Historiarum Philippicarum* how ‘the kings of the east [...] carried on no wars without a mercenary army of Gauls; nor, if they were driven from their thrones, did they seek protection with any other people than the Gauls. Such indeed was the terror of the Gallic name, and the unvaried good fortune of their arms, that princes thought they could neither maintain their power in security, nor recover it if lost, without the assistance of Gallic valor’.<sup>86</sup> Despite his political allegiance to Rome, the elevated praise of the military prowess of the Gauls is considerable, therefore it is relatively safe to assume that Galatian mercenaries were in high demand among the Hellenistic successor kingdoms, which sprang up after the death of Alexander the Great. To illustrate this demand for Galatian mercenaries in the Eastern Mediterranean region we turn once more to historical sources. In 218 BC the Attalid king, Attalus of Pergamon, undertook an expedition to Selge to recapture his former territories with the help of ‘the Aegosagae from Gaul whom were going through all the cities in Aeolis’ and terrifying the local population.<sup>87</sup> At the Battle of Magnesia in 190 BC the army of Antiochus III of the Seleucid Empire fought the Roman Republic and their ally, Eumenes II of Pergamum.<sup>88</sup> The Greek author Appian (59-165) relates in *Syriaca* how the cavalry of Antiochus at Magnesia ‘were stationed on either wing, consisting of the mail-clad Galatians and the Macedonian corps called the *agema*’.<sup>89</sup> Besides the cavalry there ‘were the Galatian bands of the Tectosagi, the Troceni, the Tolistoboi, [...] and a mingling of other tribes’.<sup>90</sup> The last of the Antigonidae kings, Perseus, feeling strong enough to challenge the upcoming might of Rome in the region enlisted Gallic mercenaries in the Third Macedonian War in 171 BC and defeated them near Larissa, in the Thessaly region of Greece.<sup>91</sup> In short, during the Hellenistic period great numbers of Celtic mercenaries were present on the battlefields of the age.

## MERCENARIES IN EGYPT

To what extent is the identity of Galatian mercenaries culturally set apart from the dominant culture in Ptolemaic Egypt? Like the other successor kingdoms, Ptolemaic Egypt was no exception. The constant warfare of the Hellenistic age, where the founding of separate Graeco-Macedonian kingdoms and the conflicts arising because of it, created a

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<sup>86</sup> Marcus Junianus Justinus, *Liber Historiarum Philippicarum*, 25.2

<sup>87</sup> Polybius 5.77

<sup>88</sup> Marcus Junianus Justinus 25.2

<sup>89</sup> Appian 11.31

<sup>90</sup> Appian 11.32

<sup>91</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History, c. 1000 BC-51 AD* (London 1990) 85.

great demand for mercenaries.<sup>92</sup> Most of the successor kings were foremost conquerors who carved out a kingdom in foreign lands, where native populations were not to be expected to be enthusiastic or show a degree of loyalty towards their new rulers, and where Greek settlers were not large enough in number to supply soldiers for the army.<sup>93</sup> The French linguist Marcel Launey makes use of epigraphic records and literary sources to demonstrate the various geographical origins of Hellenistic armies, throughout the period. While the Greek mercenaries, due to poverty, expulsions and exile, make up the bulk of these armies a distinct number are made up by the 'barbarian' mercenaries.<sup>94</sup>

The renown of the Galatian as a fighting man was well established in the eastern regions of the Mediterranean and as early as 274 BC Galatian mercenaries served in the armies of Ptolemy II Philadelphos.<sup>95</sup> After the death of Ptolemy I, himself yet another former general of Alexander the Great, the new pharaoh had to compete against his half-brother Magas of Cyrene, who rebelled against his rule, and sought to take their father's throne for himself. The prospect of civil war, while being unable to trust his army for fear of deserting to his half-brother, may well have been the reason why Ptolemy hired a band of four thousand Galatians.<sup>96</sup> Bought with gold and the promise of loot, these 'barbarian' mercenaries would have been thought to have little regard for local political interests or religious issues and thus remain loyal to the king. However, employment of foreign mercenaries could also be politically dangerous. Ptolemy II defeated his half-brother but was unable to follow up on his victory as his Galatians mutinied. This gave Magas enough time to establish and secure his rule over the Greek colonies of Cyrenaica, in present day Libya. According to Pausanias, the Galatians mutinied to overthrow Ptolemy II and take control of Egypt.<sup>97</sup> Despite the presence of four thousand Galatian mercenaries the attempt to overthrow Ptolemy II with his armies in the field seems overly ambitious. A better motive is brought forth by the Greek court poet Kallimachos of Cyrene (305-240 BC) who was living in Alexandria when the mutiny took place.<sup>98</sup> In his *Hymn to Delos* he commemorates the defeat of the Celtic mercenaries who conspired to sack the cities and sanctuaries of Egypt and return to Galatia, while he was distracted by the uprising of his half-brother Magas.<sup>99</sup> The uprising did not end well for the Galatian mercenaries as Ptolemy II responded swift and drove them onto an island in the Sebennyitic tribute of the Nile, where they, according to Pausanias, 'perished by hunger and each other's swords'.<sup>100</sup> Despite this betrayal, Ptolemy II, however, did not harbor grudges or resentment against

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<sup>92</sup> Pasi Loman, 'Mercenaries. Their Woman, and Colonization', *Klio* 87.2 (2005) 346-365, at 346.

<sup>93</sup> Loman, 'Mercenaries. Their Woman, and Colonization', 346.

<sup>94</sup> Loman, 347.

<sup>95</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History, c. 1000 BC-51 AD* (London 1990), 111.

<sup>96</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celtic Empire*, 111.

<sup>97</sup> Pausanias 1.7.2

<sup>98</sup> Berresford Ellis, 122.

<sup>99</sup> Callimachus, *Hymns to Delos*, 185-188

<sup>100</sup> Pausanias 1.7.2-3

the Galatians. He actively recruited more Galatians into his service as Egypt was developing commerce between the Nile and the Red Sea, thus establishing trade routes with Arabia, Ethiopia and India.<sup>101</sup>

The continued presence of Galatian mercenaries in Ptolemaic Egypt is well attested in historical sources. In the third century BC, Galatian troops whom were no longer needed for active duty, were rewarded with a plot of land to cultivate, usually in the Fayum.<sup>102</sup> Much like the veterans of the Roman legions in later times these mercenaries and their families would inhabit newly conquered, disputed or strategically important locations.<sup>103</sup> These *cleruchs*, roughly translated as 'sleepers', were expected to retain their military skills and be available for the rulers of Egypt to serve in their armies. His successor Ptolemy III Euergetus continued to recruit large contingents of Galatian mercenaries when he invaded Syria in 245 BC and defeated the Seleucid king Seleucus II Callinicus Pogon in the Third Syrian War.<sup>104</sup>

During the reign of Ptolemy V Philopator it is reported that a significant number of Galatians and their families were living in Egypt.<sup>105</sup> The French historian Marcel Launey suggests in his *Recherches sur les armées hellénistiques* that a colony of these Galatians lived south east of Alexandria.<sup>106</sup> Polybius refers to these Celts as the *Katoikoi* and their descendants as *Epigonoï*.<sup>107</sup> Archeological evidence supports the hypothesis of a Galatian presence in the second half of the 3rd century BC in the region.<sup>108</sup> Prominent among the evidence are the inscriptions whom identified at least three Galatian mercenaries. These inscriptions occur on a limestone loculus slabs in a tomb found in 1884 in the cemetery of Hadra, south-east of Alexandria.<sup>109</sup> Pottery inscribed with Celtic names in Greek have been found, featuring distinct Celtic names like Adiatorix, Epossognatus and Toredorix.<sup>110</sup> More traces that suggest the Galatian identity was retained and thus strengthened in Ptolemaic Egypt is seen in the events of 217 BC. Polybius records how Ptolemy IV Philopator called the *cleruchs* to arms and among their number came four thousand Galatians, based in Egypt, who played an important role in the Battle of Raphia in 223 BC.<sup>111</sup> It is interesting to note how they are being described purely as Galatian, not as Egyptians. The Irish historian John P. Mahaffy comments in *The Army of Ptolemy IV at*

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<sup>101</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *The Celtic Empire: The First Millennium of Celtic History, c. 1000 BC-51 AD* (London 1990), 112.

<sup>102</sup> Barry Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts* (Oxford 2018) 208.

<sup>103</sup> Christelle Fischer-Bovet, *Army and Society in Ptolemaic Egypt* (Cambridge 2014) 66.

<sup>104</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *Celt and Greek* (London 1997) 104.

<sup>105</sup> John P. Mahaffy, 'The Army of Ptolemy IV at Raphia', *Hermathena* 10.24 (1898) 140-152, at 150

<sup>106</sup> Marcel Launey, 'Recherches sur les Armées Hellénistiques 2', *BEFAR* 169 (1949) 1949-1995, at 1951.

<sup>107</sup> Polybius 5.65.10

<sup>108</sup> A.C. Merriam, 'Painted Sepulchral Stelai from Alexandria', *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts* 3.3/4 (1887) 261-268, at 265.

<sup>109</sup> Merriam, 'Painted Sepulchral Stelai from Alexandria', 267.

<sup>110</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *Celt and Greek: Celts in the Hellenic World* (London 1997) 104.

<sup>111</sup> Mahaffy, 'The Army of Ptolemy IV at Raphia', 150.

*Raphia* how he believes that the Galatians were always seen as foreigners, despite their presence as settlers in the Fayim.<sup>112</sup> During the reign of Ptolemy V Epiphanes there was considerable unrest in Egypt. Faced with an uprising along the Nile valley in 186 BC the pharaoh sends an army of Galatian mercenaries to quell the rebellion in upper Egypt.<sup>113</sup> One of the most intriguing proof of the presence of these Galatian mercenaries is found in the chapel of Horus, in the tomb of pharaoh Seti I, nearby the great temple of Karnak. Four Galatian warriors inscribed a fascinating piece of graffiti on the walls. It reads in Greek;

Τῶν Γαλατῶν	<i>Of the Galatians,</i>
Θόας Καλλίστρατος	<i>we, Thaos, Callistratos,</i>
Ἀκάννων	<i>Acannon</i>
Ἀπολλώνιος	<i>Apollonios,</i>
ἦλθομεν	<i>came,</i>
καὶ ἀλώπεκα	<i>and a fox</i>
ἐλάβομεν ὧδε	<i>caught we here</i>

The inscription of these four Galatians serving in the army of Ptolemy V recorded how they caught a jackal, which according to Berresford Ellis, they mistook for a European fox, and added their names.<sup>114</sup> It is important they did write in Greek. Hubert suggests that Greek was their language spoken by mercenaries serving in the Hellenistic armies, not unlike French being the common language spoken in the modern French Foreign Legion.<sup>115</sup> While the Galatians used the Greek language in their dealings with the Hellenic world they retained the Celtic language like they did in Galatia itself.<sup>116</sup> The thesis that the Galatian presence in Egypt retained their Celtic identity is confirmed by the Roman-Jewish historian and hagiographer Flavius Josephus who mentions in the *Bellum Judaicum* how four hundred of Cleopatra VII's Galatian mercenaries 'entered the service of the Jewish king Herod the Great, forming part of Herod's personal bodyguard, and figuring prominently in his funeral service in 4 BC'.<sup>117</sup>

We have thus have established a chronological continuation in the recruitment and presence of Galatian mercenaries and their families in Ptolemaic Egypt. Starting with Ptolemy II for over a period of two hundred and fifty years until the end of the Ptolemaic dynasty with the death of Cleopatra VII. Galatian ethnic distinctions based on language,

<sup>112</sup> John P. Mahaffy, 'The Army of Ptolemy IV at Raphia', *Hermathena* 10.24 (1898) 140-152, at 150

<sup>113</sup> Henri Hubert, *The Greatness & Decline of the Celts* (London 1934) 52.

<sup>114</sup> Peter Berresford Ellis, *Celt and Greek: Celts in the Hellenic World* (London 1997) 107.

<sup>115</sup> Hubert, *The Greatness & Decline of the Celts* (London 1934) 51.

<sup>116</sup> David Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (London 2002) 188.

<sup>117</sup> Josephus, *The Jewish War* 1.20.3

material culture and physical appearance must have remained strong. Their identity in Egypt was seemingly not only important to the Galatians themselves but also for their employers in the Hellenistic world. The Galatian as the Other was crucial for the success of the message that Hellenistic kings wanted to show their enemies, and subjects. If they defeated the Galatians they were proud of their achievement, while they served the king it shows the king's might in harnessing the violence that the Galatians could unleash.

Historical sources on their movements and the many battles that features Galatian mercenaries, sometimes even serving on both sides of the battlefield, strengthen the thesis that the Hellenistic world saw the Galatians as a distinct cultural entity, an identity which they likely retained in Egypt. The German historian Heiko Steuer discusses in *Warrior bands, warlords and the birth of tribes and states in the first millennium AD in Middle Europe* how such a distinct cultural identity could appear. He argues that these 'volkurwanderungen', should not just be seen as tribes migrating with their families and cattle and all but rather as military campaigns.<sup>118</sup> Steuer argues that the formation of oppida are a reaction to the presence of the Mediterranean states and only appear in the Middle and Late La Tène period, with the aid of returning mercenaries.<sup>119</sup> With small fortified cities appearing in Italy and southern Gaul the French archaeologist Patrice Brun agrees and observes an increasing organizational complexity among the tribes in this period.<sup>120</sup> While it is quite difficult to come up with adequate definitions Steuer has identified a framework in which the rise of the Galatians can be explained. In the beginning clan and tribal communities offered military services to the armies of more advanced organized states, like the Hellenistic states. They returned home with gold and silver as pay, along with ideas and concepts of more advanced statebuilding.<sup>121</sup> If we look at the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC we see large bands of Celtic warriors crossing the Alps heading south and east towards the Italic peninsula and the Balkans. With the pressing need for mercenaries' after the death of Alexander the Great bands of warriors once more emerge and form up around warlords, becoming a separate entity 'that had less and less involvement with their communities and lands or origin'.<sup>122</sup> In order to keep these war bands together a warlord had to ensure a steady flow of income by raiding. With the armies growing larger a constant war had to be waged. If we apply this to the situation in the Balkans in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century we discover similar circumstances. Between the death of Alexander, the Great in 323 BC and the invasion of Greece the warbands are growing in size and move south in force. Eventually, the case of successful warbands like those of

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<sup>118</sup> Heiko Steuer, 'Warrior bands, warlord and the birth of tribes and states in the first millennium AD in Middle Europe', in: Ton Otto (red.), *Warfare and Society: archeological and social anthropological perspectives* (Aarhus 2002) 227-236, at 228.

<sup>119</sup> Steuer, 'Warrior bands, warlord and the birth of tribes and states in the first millennium AD in Middle Europe', 229.

<sup>120</sup> Patrice Bun, 'From chieftdom to state organization in Celtic Europe', in: Bettina Arnold and Blair Gibson (red.), *Celtic Chieftdom, Celtic State* (Cambridge 1995) 13-25, at 17.

<sup>121</sup> Steuer, 233.

<sup>122</sup> Steuer, 233.

Leonnorios and Loutarios, the warrior bands began to occupy and at the same time settle in the territories they had fought in, instead of returning to the tribe of origin. While generalization of Steuer's thesis is only possible in a limited manner it seems however that similar dynamics took place in Galatia and made its way into Ptolemaic Egypt.

As discussed in the previous chapter the presence of these non-aligned foreign mercenaries in Ptolemaic Egypt serves a great number of purposes. Despite the considerable economic costs to hire Galatian mercenaries they have, in theory, little regard to the local political interests whereas bands of Greek or Libyan mercenaries have been known to cause internal strife in the Ptolemaic kingdom. The question arises if in time of peace the mercenaries ceased to be active members of the Ptolemaic military. While it is impossible to know the extent in which the ethnic mercenary element was stationed in garrisons it seems likely such a force would be put to use whenever possible.<sup>123</sup> The reported presence of mercenaries in the Royal Guard of the Ptolemies strengthens such a hypothesis.<sup>124</sup> While the *cleruchs* serve as farmers and soldiers Griffith argues how 'they remained soldiers in anything at all but in name, the settlers can no more be called mercenaries than the citizen troops of Athens or Sparta in the 5th century can be called mercenaries'.<sup>125</sup> This seems to be a rather simplified take on the interpretation of the presence of these *cleruchs*. Multiple reasons jump to mind in which would strengthen such a hypothesis. For one, Hellenistic kings tend to segregate mercenaries to avoid tension and the Ptolemies are in this matter no exception. Sources indicate some were based around Alexandria and the Fayum. The segregation of these ethnic mercenary elements could have served multiple purposes. If we return to Streuer we note how these bands of mercenaries and their families become a new and separate entity.<sup>126</sup> Like in modern times immigrants tend to cluster in certain areas, it is therefore likely that mercenaries serving in a new and strange hot land would likely remain together. It is likely that these Galatians brought with them their own gods and rites.<sup>127</sup> Archeological evidence suggests the Celtic religions were rich and varied in nature. While historical sources on Celtic religion are sparse and far between it is clear they center around the supernatural and is present in the world around them, in the shape of natural phenomena like springs, lakes and trees.<sup>128</sup> Many divinities like Epona, Nodens, Arduinna and the antlered god Cernunnos had close affinity with animals and thus took on a partial persona

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<sup>123</sup> Charles T. Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World* (London 1968) 125.

<sup>124</sup> Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World*, 126.

<sup>125</sup> Griffith, 135.

<sup>126</sup> Streuer, 'Warrior bands, warlord and the birth of tribes and states in the first millennium AD in Middle Europe', in: Ton Otto (red.), *Warfare and Society: archeological and social anthropological perspectives* (Aarhus 2002) 227-236, at 235.

<sup>127</sup> Miranda J. Green, 'The Gods and the Supernatural', in Miranda J. Green (red.), *The Celtic World* (London 1995) 465-488, at 465.

<sup>128</sup> Green, 'The Gods and the Supernatural', 465.

of bulls or stags.<sup>129</sup> Contrary to the Greco-Roman pantheon, the Celts had no defined notion of the gods.<sup>130</sup> Diodorus notes how 'Brennus, the king of the Gauls, on entering a temple found no dedications of gold or silver, and when he came only upon images of stone and wood he laughed at them, to think that men, believing that gods have human form, should set up their images in wood and stone'.<sup>131</sup> Strabo notes how the Celtiberians perform devotions and dances with their families in front of the gates of their townships.<sup>132</sup> It is not unlikely that similar gatherings would have taken place among their eastern brethren, which would suggest that religious participation remained strong among mercenaries whom lived in segregated fashion. The importance of the worship should not be underestimated. Polybius relates how a Galatian army was once in awe by an eclipse of the moon and refused to march on.<sup>133</sup>

Archeological evidence of the presence of Galatian material culture in these mercenary populations is however sparse. While the number of sources on Galatian mercenaries in the Ptolemaic period is limited, and often short and fragmentary in nature, their actual presence is not a subject of discussion. If we turn to the archeological evidence archaeologists encounter difficulties in proving the presence of these Galatian mercenaries without the support of written sources. However, some examples of Galatian self-representation have survived. In the necropolis of Hadra, south of Alexandria, three funeral *stelae* (figure 2) have been found depicting Galatians. All three monuments clearly state they are Galatian in nature and differ greatly from those created by the Hellenes themselves. One such painted sepulchral *stelai* shows the figure of a warrior. It is difficult to make out any details but



Figure 2: painted sepulchral stele from Alexandria (in *Journal of Archeology* 2.17, 2019).

'he seems to be standing at rest, holding erect, in his right hand a spear, resting it on the ground, and with his left hand his oval shield [...] upright and free from his body'.<sup>134</sup> Two things stand out on the painted limestone funerary slab; the size of the shield and the blue cloak which identifies him as a member of a corps of Galatian mercenaries, found in a

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<sup>129</sup> Miranda J. Green, 'The Gods and the Supernatural', in Miranda J. Green (red.), *The Celtic World* (London 1995) 465-488, at 466.

<sup>130</sup> Davis Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (London 2002) 260.

<sup>131</sup> Diodorus Siculus, 22.11

<sup>132</sup> Strabo, 3.4.16

<sup>133</sup> Polybius 5.78

<sup>134</sup> A.C. Merriam, 'Painted Sepulchral Stelai from Alexandria', *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts* 3.3/4 (1887) 261-268, at 265.



necropolis devoted to them and other military units.<sup>135</sup> The scene in which a Galatian and his wife and children are depicted supports Launey's thesis of a colony of Galatians living near Alexandria. There is nothing intrinsically impossible at the hypothesis that the Galatians in Egypt retained much of their ethnic integrity. The influx of bands of mercenaries from Galatia during the 250 years of their presence in Ptolemaic Egypt suggests a constant requirement for mercenaries from outside the kingdom. This means there was a steady influx of 'fresh blood' from Galatian mercenaries into the Galatian community in Egypt. These newcomers would have spoken Celtic and thus will have strengthened the use of the Galatian language. Besides the cultural strengthening they, foremost, must have retained their distinct Celtic style of combat. If the *cleruchs*, and the Galatians serving in the Royal Guard and the garrisons, all retained their ethnic fighting skills it seems likely they would have used their distinct shields and long sword.

## THE CELTIC WAY OF WAR

How did the weaponry used by Galatian mercenaries differ from the military doctrine used by the Hellenes? The Greek author Diodorus Siculus of Sicily is known for writing the monumental *Bibliotheca Historica*. This immense universal history, much of which survives, is written between 60 and 30 BC and has shaped much of our perception of the Celts. For the Greeks and Romans this fascination was tinged with fear and respect for the Gallic prowess in battle. In modern popular culture, the towering Gaul with his man-sized shield, long sword and drooping moustache remains a central icon of our imagination. Diodorus Siculus suggests in hindsight how the armor of the Gauls 'includes man-sized shields decorated in individual fashion. Some of them have projecting bronze animals of fine workmanship [...] and on their heads they wear bronze helmets which possesses large projecting figures lending the appearance of enormous stature to the wearer'.<sup>136</sup> With the movement of large contingents of Galatian mercenaries in the Eastern Mediterranean these swords and shields must have traveled with them to Egypt and would have set them apart in contrast to Egyptian troops and mercenaries from a different military doctrine, like the Hellenistic mercenaries or Egyptian infantry.<sup>137</sup> As barbarians, the Galatians were, of course, seen as the quintessential 'Other' and completely different from the population of Ptolemaic Egypt. Therefore, their non-Mediterranean attributes and behavior had to be stressed by the very same people who hired them, the Hellenistic kings. What emerges, like elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, is a generalized, selective and above all an exaggerated caricature of the Galatian.<sup>138</sup> It is

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<sup>135</sup> A.C. Merriam, 'Painted Sepulchral Stelai from Alexandria', *The American Journal of Archaeology and of the History of the Fine Arts* 3.3/4 (1887) 261-268, 262.

<sup>136</sup> Diodorus Siculus 5.30.2

<sup>137</sup> Charles T. Griffith, *The Mercenaries of the Hellenistic World* (London 1968) 112.

<sup>138</sup> Barry Cuncliffe, *The Celts: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford 2003) 46.

however undoubtedly true that the pharaoh did make significant efforts to preserve the identity of these outlandish troops in the armies of Egypt. The notable impression these Galatian mercenaries made on the civilizations ringing the Eastern Mediterranean is widely recorded in literature, sculptures and art. Imagine the arrival of these barbarians in Hellenistic Egypt... tales of their ferocity would by then have been widely established in the Hellenistic world and word of their martial prowess must have traveled ahead of them. To visualize the differences between the Hellenes and Galatians we turn to the amazing artwork of English historical and fantasy illustrator Angus McBride (1931-2007). His work may give us a visual interpretation of how the presence of Galatian mercenaries (figure 3) could have been perceived by the local population of Alexandria. His artwork shows three tall and bulky Galatians on parade. They wear their distinctive ethnic garb; man-sized shields, long swords and blue cloaks, fastened by a buckle on the shoulder, that marks them as part of the Royal Guard.<sup>139</sup> One of them wears a distinct bronze Gallic Montefortino helmet associated with then La Tène period.<sup>140</sup> Like Diodorus Siculus notes how 'some of them shave the beard, but others let it grow a little, and the nobles shave their cheeks, but they let the moustache grow until it covers the mouth'.<sup>141</sup> McBride has

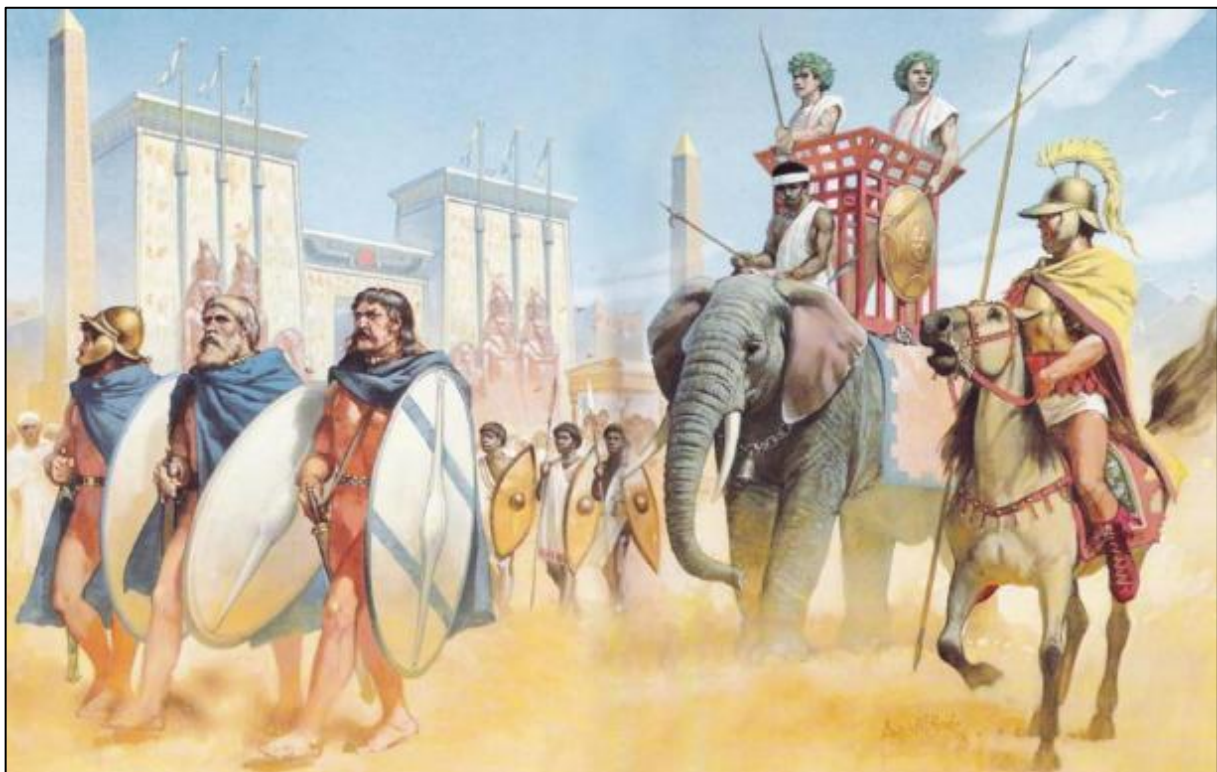


Figure 3: Galatian mercenaries on parade at Alexandria by Angus McBride, (in: *Ancient Armies of the Middle East*, 1981).

used the exact same symbolic identification used by the Hellenes themselves, to highlight the difference between the Galatians and the troops marching them. Despite the lack of historical sources on the occasion we can make imagine how the local Hellenistic

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<sup>139</sup> Diodorus Siculus 5.28-30

<sup>140</sup> Peter Wilcox, *Rome's Enemies 2: Gallic and British Celts* (London 1993) 15.

<sup>141</sup> Diodorus Siculus 5.28-30

population must have viewed their arrival by how Roman and Greek authors describe these warriors throughout the centuries. While they characterize the Celts as different the proposed identity of the Celts brought forth by Greek and Roman authors remains mostly identical. They record an impressive physical stature, warlike reputation, boastful nature and exotic equipment would have been visible to all by their mere presence. The Galatians therefore differentiated greatly from those living in Ptolemaic Egypt. Even with the moderate approach of the German historian Karl Strobel, who defines the Celtic tribes as a purely linguistic group, the presence of a material-cultural based uniqueness of these Galatians show a definite difference between the Hellenistic and Egyptian cultures and that of the La Tène culture.<sup>142</sup> Strabo writes how 'the whole race, which is now called Gallic or Galatian, is madly fond of war, high spirited and quick to battle'.<sup>143</sup> The Roman poet Virgil relates how 'golden is their hair and golden their carb. They are resplendent in their striped cloaks, and their milk-white necks are circled with gold'.<sup>144</sup> More indications are provided by Diodorus Siculus who comments how the 'physically the Celts are terrifying in appearance, with deep sounding and very harsh voices'.<sup>145</sup> The Greek philosopher Aristotle claims how the Hellenes have no word 'for the man who is excessively fearless; perhaps one may call such a man mad of bereft of feeling, who fears nothing, [...], as they say of the Celts'.<sup>146</sup> In short, the arrival of Galatian mercenaries in Egypt must have been quite the spectacle.

Being mercenaries, the Galatians in Egypt must have brought with them their own Gallic style of doing battle. It is therefore important to examine the weaponry they used and how these relate to their identity. If we turn to historical sources one of the weapons that was closely associated with the Gauls is the Celtic long sword. On surveying the Classical sources we find that the bulk of these sources are descriptions of the wars in Northern Italy between the Romans and the tribes of the Boii, Insubres and Senones in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.<sup>147</sup> The Celtic invasions into the Balkans, Northern Greece and into Asia Minor in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC are also well recorded. Plutarch notes that the strength of the Gauls was depended on the use of their long sword.<sup>148</sup> Livy confirms the statement of Plutarch when he states that the Galatians in 189 BC had no other weapons then their long swords.<sup>149</sup> The Greek author Dionysius of Halicarnassus wrote in the first century BC how the Gauls 'have spears and very long slashing blades'.<sup>150</sup> Diodorus Siculus comments on the difference between the Greek and Roman styles of warfare compared to that of the

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<sup>142</sup> Karl Strobel, 'State Formation by the Galatians of Asia Minor', *Anatolica* 28 (2002) 1-44, at 2.

<sup>143</sup> Strabo 4.2.2

<sup>144</sup> Virgil 8.58

<sup>145</sup> Diodorus Siculus 5.30.3

<sup>146</sup> Aristotle 3.7.7

<sup>147</sup> Radomir Pleiner, *The Celtic Sword* (Oxford 1993) 22.

<sup>148</sup> Plutarch, 40

<sup>149</sup> Livy, 38.21

<sup>150</sup> Dionysius, *Ῥωμαϊκὴ Ἀρχαιολογία*, 4.9.13

Gauls. He notes how ‘in place of the short sword, they carry long broadswords.<sup>151</sup> The swords of the Celtic La Tène period range in size between 55 cm up to 90 cm.<sup>152</sup>The Celtic long sword with its long parallel cutting edges and point was primary used for cutting and slashing.<sup>153</sup> Compared to the shorter swords meant for thrusting used by the Greek and Romans their style of combat varies greatly with the weaponry being in use with the Celtic



Figure 4: Military equipment from the burial of Celtic mercenary warriors at Lychnidos-Ohrid. (in: *Kingmakers*, 2018).

tribes across Europe.<sup>154</sup> Archaeological finds in France, Britain, Spain, Switzerland, Denmark, southern Germany and Eastern Europe support the hypothesis that the Galatians brought their distinct form of combat with them. La Tène cemeteries are famous for the abundance of finds of swords, usually accompanied with shields, spears and helmets.<sup>155</sup> (figure 4) The myth of a howling disordered mass of barbarians with long swords that are blunted after the first swing stands in shrill contrast to the rational evolution of weaponry. French archeologist Andre Rapin argues in *Weaponry* how the development of shields, swords and sword chains indicate a ‘coherent succession of innovations, carefully tailored to a technique where nothing could be left to change.<sup>156</sup> If we break away from the image of the Celtic warrior as a mere barbarian but acknowledge

<sup>151</sup> Diodorus Siculus 5.30.3-4

<sup>152</sup> Peter Wilcox, *Rome’s Enemies 2: Gallic and British Celts* (London 1993) 21.

<sup>153</sup> W.F. Richie and J.N.G. Ritchie, *Celtic Warriors* (Aylesbury 1985) 41.

<sup>154</sup> Radomir Pleiner, *The Celtic Sword* (Oxford 1993) 23.

<sup>155</sup> Pleiner, *The Celtic Sword*, 38.

<sup>156</sup> Andre Rapin, ‘Weaponry’, in Mario Andreose and Carla Tanzi (red.), *The Celts* (London 1991) 321-331, at 326.

their success on the field of battle as a military achievement a entirely new picture emerges. The dynamic onslaught of their warriors with their long sword was effective due to the sheer force of their initial attack.<sup>157</sup> The territorial expansion of the Celts in three centuries across Europe and the East indicates that the evolving technology of their arms is fundamental to their development. I therefore argue that these evolving weaponries would have remained an essential part of the Galatian mercenary serving in the armies of the successor kings. While the archaeology of the Celts in the Eastern Mediterranean lacks the volume of finds that have being uncovered in Europe it seems unlikely that the Celtic sword would lose much of its prestige among the Galatians. It stands to reason that the Galatians, encouraged by the king, would have retained their distinct mode of fighting. Like the swords, the shield was important for Gallic warriors. The shield was their main defense and therefore crucial to their fighting technique.<sup>158</sup> These shields have been used by the Celts since the Hallstatt period and were distinctive long and oblong in shape, which commensurate with their bodies.<sup>159</sup> Diodorus Siculus gives a comprehensive description of these ‘man-sized shields decorated in a manner peculiar to them. Some of these have projecting figures in bronze, skillfully wrought not only for decoration but also for protection’.<sup>160</sup> A line of Galatian mercenaries bearing man-sized shields painted in foreign symbolism must have been a frightening sight. The shields made such an impression that Pausanias shares a tale in which the Gauls invading Greece ‘ So these crossed in the night, swimming over the river where it expands into a lake; each man used his shield, his national shield, as a raft, and the tallest of them were able to cross the water by wading’.<sup>161</sup> The archeological evidence for these Celtic man-sized shields are, like the long swords, widespread throughout Europe, both in grave finds and from votive deposits.<sup>162</sup> It is however important to note that shields were often made with perishable materials like wood, leather and wickerwork.<sup>163</sup> The Czech archeologist Radomir Pleiner therefore argues that ‘since not all shields were fitted with metal bosses and rims the number of recorded traces would be misleading’.<sup>164</sup>

While archeological finds of shields in Egypt are extremely rare, a shield has been found at Kasr El-Haritin in the Fayum that has distinct Celtic characteristics.<sup>165</sup> Although some scholars believe that the shield is in fact a Roman *scutum*, dendrochronology dating

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<sup>157</sup> Andre Rapin, ‘Weaponry’, in Mario Andreose and Carla Tanzi (red.), *The Celts* (London 1991) 321-331, at 326.

<sup>158</sup> Peter Wilcox, *Rome’s Enemies 2: Gallic and British Celts*, (London 1993) 18-19.

<sup>159</sup> W.F. Ritchie and J.N.G. Ritchie, *Celtic Warriors Shire Archeology*, (Aylesbury 1985) 37.

<sup>160</sup> Diodorus Siculus 5.30.2

<sup>161</sup> Pausanias 10.20.8

<sup>162</sup> Ritchie, *Celtic Warriors*, 38.

<sup>163</sup> Wilcox, *Rome’s Enemies 2: Gallic and British Celts*, 18.

<sup>164</sup> Radomir Pleiner, *The Celtic Sword* (Oxford 1993) 39.

<sup>165</sup> Wolfgang Kimmig, ‘Ein Keltenschild aus Aegypten’, *Germania* 24 (1940) 106-111, at 109.

has shown that the shield is dated to 160 BC.<sup>166</sup> The American historian Philip Freeman argues against the possibility that the shield is Roman and states that 160 BC predates any significant presence of Roman troops in Egypt.<sup>167</sup> The American historian and archeologist Matthew Coleman agrees in *The Galatian Shield in Egypt* with Freeman on the characters of the shield. Furthermore, Coleman argues that Galatian ethnic distinctions were 'very strong' and 'seemingly important not only to the Galatians themselves but also to outside observers of their culture'.<sup>168</sup> Coleman thus takes note of the persistence of the Galatian culture surrounded by Greek neighbors in the Mediterranean basin. He argues that it remains consistently clear that the Galatians were considered distinctly different from the Hellenistic population, up to the Roman annexation of Egypt in 30 BC.

More traces on Celtic shields in Egypt can be found in recent research on the chronological dating of the Great festival of Ptolemy II Philadelphus. The Italian historian Elena Calandra argues in *The Ephemeral and the Eternal. The Pavilion of Ptolemy Philadelphos in the Court of Alexandria* that these shields were used to identify the Galatians and set them apart from other ethnic mercenaries, like the Greeks.<sup>169</sup> The typical Ptolemaic infantryman in the Hellenistic period was known to use a small shield with a vertical handle, allowing to be used in concert with a two-handed spear as used in the Macedonian phalanx.<sup>170</sup> The Greek author Athenaeus describes in *The Deipnosophists* how the king erected a pavilion in the palace grounds in Alexandria to entertain his guests. Athenaeus records how 'by the posts round the entire tent there were placed animals carved in marble by the foremost artists, a hundred in number. And in the spaces between the posts there were pictures hung by the Sicyonian painters; and alternately with these there were carefully selected images of every kind; and garments embroidered with gold, and most exquisite cloaks, some of them having portraits of the kings of Egypt embroidered on them; and some, stories taken from the mythology. Above them were placed gold and silver shields alternately'.<sup>171</sup> Calandra argues that the shields are barbarian in origin and entertains the notion that these might have been trophies.<sup>172</sup> If the shields are indeed barbaric in nature the thesis that these are indeed trophies has merit. Athenaeus refers to the shields that hung in the pavilion as *thyreoi*-shields, which

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<sup>166</sup> Thomas G.E. Powell, *The Celts* (New York 1980) 127-128.

<sup>167</sup> Philip Freeman, *The Philosopher and the Druids* (New York 2002) 47.

<sup>168</sup> Matthew Coleman, 'The Galatian Shield in Egypt', *Journal of Ancient Egyptian Interconnections* 4.1 (2011) 1-8, at 3.

<sup>169</sup> Elena Calandra, *The Ephemeral and the Eternal. The Pavilion of Ptolemy Philadelphos in the Court of Alexandria* (Athens 2011) 514.

<sup>170</sup> Bezalel Bar-Kochva, *The Seleucid Army: Organization and Tactics in the Great Campaigns* (New York 1976), 54.

<sup>171</sup> Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistai*, 5.196

<sup>172</sup> Calandra, *The Ephemeral and the Eternal. The Pavilion of Ptolemy Philadelphos in the Court of Alexandria*, 517.

in the Greek vocabulary refers to a door-shaped, oval or rectangular shield.<sup>173</sup> Besides their obvious size compared to the smaller, half round shield called *peltai* of the Thracian mercenaries or the round shields *aspides* from the Greek and Macedonians used in the procession at the Great Festival the *thyreoi*-shield were designed with notable properties of their own; shape, size, a spina and an umbo in the center.<sup>174</sup> In comparison, the soldiers of the Greek and Macedonian phalanx were protected by with round shields of the Macedonian type. The *thyreoi*-shields at the Great festival should therefore not be identified as a symbolic display of the equipment of Ptolemy's Macedonian and Greek soldiers but as the boastful triumphalism of a powerful victorious king whom had defeated an uprising of notorious mercenaries. With the warlike reputation of the Galatians in mind these shields must be seen as a way to imprint the might of the king onto his guests. Similar use of the Celtic shield as identifier for Galatians in this period can be seen on a *tetradrachm* of Ptolemy II and his wife Arsinoe II. (figure 5) The *thyreoi*-shield in the background of the coin commemorates the victory of Ptolemy II over the Galatian mercenaries.<sup>175</sup> Similar use of Celtic shields to celebrate the defeat of Celtic forces was used by king Pyrrhus of Epirus when faced with the army of Antigonus Gonatas in Macedon. Plutarch notes in the *Life of Pyrrhus* how;



Figure 5: Ptolemaic coin with Celtic shield in the background (in: *Historia Mundi* 5, 2016).

<p>Τοὺς θυρεοὺς ὁ Μολοσσὸς Ἴτωνίδι δῶρον Ἀθάνῃ Πύρρος ἀπὸ θρασέων ἐκρέμασεν Γαλατᾶν, πάντα τὸν Ἀντιγόνου καθελὼν στρατόν· οὐ μέγα θαῦμα· αἰχμηταὶ καὶ νῦν καὶ πάρος Αἰακίδαι.</p>	<p>These shields, now suspended here as a gift to Athena Itonis, Pyrrhus the Molossian took from valiant Gauls, after defeating the entire army of Antigonus; which is no great wonder; or now, as well as in olden time, the Aeacidae are brave spearmen</p>
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<sup>173</sup> Yuri Kuzman, New perspectives on the Date of the Great Festival of Ptolemy II', *Klio* 99.2 (2017) 513-527, at 517.

<sup>174</sup> Michael Eichberg, *Die Entwicklung einer Italisch-Etruskischen Schildform von den Anfängen bis zur Zeit Caesars* (Frankfurt am Main 1987) 56.

<sup>175</sup> Elizabeth Hahn Bengel, 'From Aegina to Andronicus: A Survey of Coinage at the Art Institute of Chicago', *Historia Mundi* 5 (2016) 5, 206-207, 209.

This boastful triumphalism and demonisation of the Galatians is thus deeply rooted in Hellenistic times. Faced with the fragile state of the region's political stability after the death of Alexander the Great kings used this repeated demonisation to their advantage and to legitimize their own status and continued to do so throughout the classical period.<sup>176</sup> If we turn to the most famous sculptural depictions of Galatians we turn towards the marble figures of 'The Dying Gaul' and the Gallic chieftain who plunged his sword into his own breast. Both were part of a campaign by king Attalus to secure his authority in Asia Minor between 240 and 223 BC.<sup>177</sup> Attalus overpowered 'the native troops of Antigonos and his Gallic mercenaries and he pursued them to the coast cities', Pausanias continues how the 'extent of the fighting and the decisive character of the victory of Pyrrhus are shown best by the Celtic armor dedicated in the sanctuary of Itonian Athena'.<sup>178</sup> The defeat of the Galatian mercenaries seems to be of greater



Figure 6: Plaque at Pergamon, depicting captured Celtic weapons. (in: *Historical Atlas of the Celtic World*, 2009).

importance than the victory on Antigonos himself. We can thus note that Hellenistic monarchs were willing to demonize those same foreign troops that served them. For the Hellenistic culture creating the barbarian other served to establish their own identity, distinctiveness and brings forth an exclusion of said other. The case of Celtic mercenaries serving in the armies of foreign rulers holds an opposing dynamic in which the cultural identity of the warband becomes strengthened by living among a foreign culture. Portrayals of Galatians, and particularity their equipment, on Hellenistic sculptures, becomes one of the defining ethnic characters of their presence in Ptolemaic Egypt. Othering, here, is not only merely an identity imposed upon the mercenaries by the local dominant culture, rather it is the strengthening of the Celtic cultural identity by the minority group themselves.

<sup>176</sup> Rolf Strootman, 'Kings against Celts: Deliverance from barbarians as a theme in Hellenistic royal propaganda', *The Manipulative Mode* (2004) 101-141, at 127.

<sup>177</sup> Stephen Mitchel, 'The Galatians: Representation and Reality', in: Andrew Eskine (red.), *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (New York 2009) 280-293, at 285.

<sup>178</sup> Pausanias, 1.13.2



# CONCLUSION

To what extent can the cultural identity of Galatian mercenaries serving in the armies of the Ptolemies be deduced from sources and material culture, providing evidence for the strengthening of a Celtic cultural identity in Egypt? The reconstruction of a Galatian community and understanding their role in Ptolemaic Egypt is no easy matter. Written sources like Pausanias, Livy and Appian still dominate our account of the Celts, but while a critical perspective is required to overcome generalizations, the ferocity and martial prowess of the Galatian mercenary must not be overlooked. This thesis therefore argues that Galatian ethnic distinctions, based on language and material culture, remained strong, especially when we indicate the use of ethnic weaponry associated with the Celts.

If the popular image of the towering Gallic warrior with his long sword and man-sized shield should be applied to any Celtic group, this surely would be the case with Celtic mercenaries serving in the armies of the successor kings. Despite the negative characteristics, seen through the lens of Othering, a grudging admiration towards the Celts can be found in the work of Classical authors. And while our written sources on the presence of Galatian mercenaries in Egypt are sparse. It is however possible to use the work of these authors to analyze the psyche of Hellenistic kings in earlier encounters towards the Celts. Much of our understanding of the Galatians is closely related to the narratives of the invasion of Greece in 279 BC. Authors like Diodorus Siculus, Polybius, Herodotus, Livy, Appian, and Pausanias all offer insight in the workings of the Classical mindset towards the Celts. Foremost of these authors is Pausanias whom at the start of his work divides humanity into 'Hellenes' and 'Barbarians'.<sup>179</sup> Pausanias describes the incursions of the Gauls as part of a recurring 'clash of civilizations' in which the Greek civilization constantly has to defend herself against the barbarian hordes.<sup>180</sup> This battle for freedom is a recurring fundamental theme to the Greeks, up to modern days. The invasion of the Gauls, Pausanias suggests, should therefore be characterized as part of an age-old struggle for freedom.

One conclusion that emerges studying the role of Galatian mercenaries that is it unrealistic to expect a clear and final answer. The picture drawn is rather one of a dynamic interaction between the local population and the conquering newcomers. The Galatians provide an intriguing example in which a dominant culture retains much of her integrity but become an ethnic mixed entity nonetheless, thus establishing themselves firmly in the region. While the material culture of the Galatians is not as extensively studied as one might hope we see from archeological evidence how the local material culture is adopted by the Celts. However, being a minority in their new territory the Galatians have retained much of their Celtic identity, in language and material culture.

While written sources on the movement of Galatians in Ptolemaic Egypt do not exist in large quantities and seldom portrayed them in a favourable light it has become

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<sup>179</sup> Pausanias 10.19.5

<sup>180</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, 'The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order', *Foreign Affairs* 74 (1993) 22-49, at 39.

clear that they were an important source of mercenaries throughout the Eastern Mediterranean. Despite economic costs, they were an attractive option for Hellenistic kings to safeguard their political interests against internal strife in the kingdom. Having little regard for local political or religious issues their loyalty is reserved towards the king, who paid them in kind. However, employment of foreign mercenaries could be also quite dangerous, as Galatians mutinied on more than one occasion. The Galatian identity in Ptolemaic Egypt is thus set culturally apart from other cultures. We can trace a continuation of Galatian mercenaries serving in the armies of the Ptolemean kings, sometimes on both sides of the battle. Historical sources confirm a system where mercenaries were rewarded with a plot of land to cultivate while they were expected to retain their military skills and be called upon whenever the need for more troops arises. Archeological evidence found at Alexandria, Karnak, Hadra and the Fayim supports the notion of continuation of Galatian mercenaries in Egypt. Starting with Ptolemy II over a period of two hundred and fifty years until the reign of Cleopatra VII and the annexation by Rome. The presence of the Galatian mercenaries on the battlefields of the Eastern Mediterranean and the way they are described in sources point towards a distinct separate entity. This entity retained much of its Celtic cultural identity and it is likely with the continues movement of mercenaries from Galatia into Egypt strengthens the thesis that their identity was retained.

With the established continuation of the presence of Galatian mercenaries in Ptolemaic Egypt I argue that the Galatians in fact retained their distinct Celtic military doctrine, and probably were encouraged to do so. With the movement of large bands of mercenaries throughout the Hellenistic period their distinct ethnic weaponry would have travelled with them. The use of man-sized shields, long swords and their distinct garb would have set them apart from the dominant Hellenistic military doctrine, namely the Macedonian phalanx or that of light Egyptian infantry. As the 'barbarian' Other the Galatians are presented in a generalized, selective and exaggerated caricature in literature, sculptures and on coinage. However, the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt have made significant efforts like segregation to preserve the nature of these exotic 'barbarian' troops. Besides the need to set the Galatians apart there is also the element of pride and tradition. If we turn to the archaeology of burials, we can take note that many of these found in Europa held swords. While the Celtic burials in the Eastern Mediterranean lack the volume of finds than their cousins in Europe it is unlikely that the long sword would lose its prestige among the Galatians. Like the sword, the man-sized shield would have been the main defense of a Galatian warrior and thus of similar importance. These weapons should not only be a part of their collective identity, but as a coherent succession of inventions that made the Galatian mercenary so successful on the field of battle. The importance of these shield is reinforced by the Hellenes themselves who use the shields as a symbolic imposed identification of these warrior people. The Galatians mercenaries were of great import to the Ptolemaic kings and their uniqueness must be retained.

For Hellenistic culture, creating the barbarian Other served to establish its own identity, distinctiveness and brings forth an exclusion of the Other. The case of Celtic mercenaries serving in the armies of foreign rulers is similar in nature but holds an

entirely different and opposing dynamic where the cultural identity of the mercenaries becomes strengthened by living among a foreign culture. Despite the concept of the Other, with its enforced stereotypes and the manufacturing of traits, the band of mercenaries becomes a new dynamic entity within the foreign culture, retaining their cultural identity.

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